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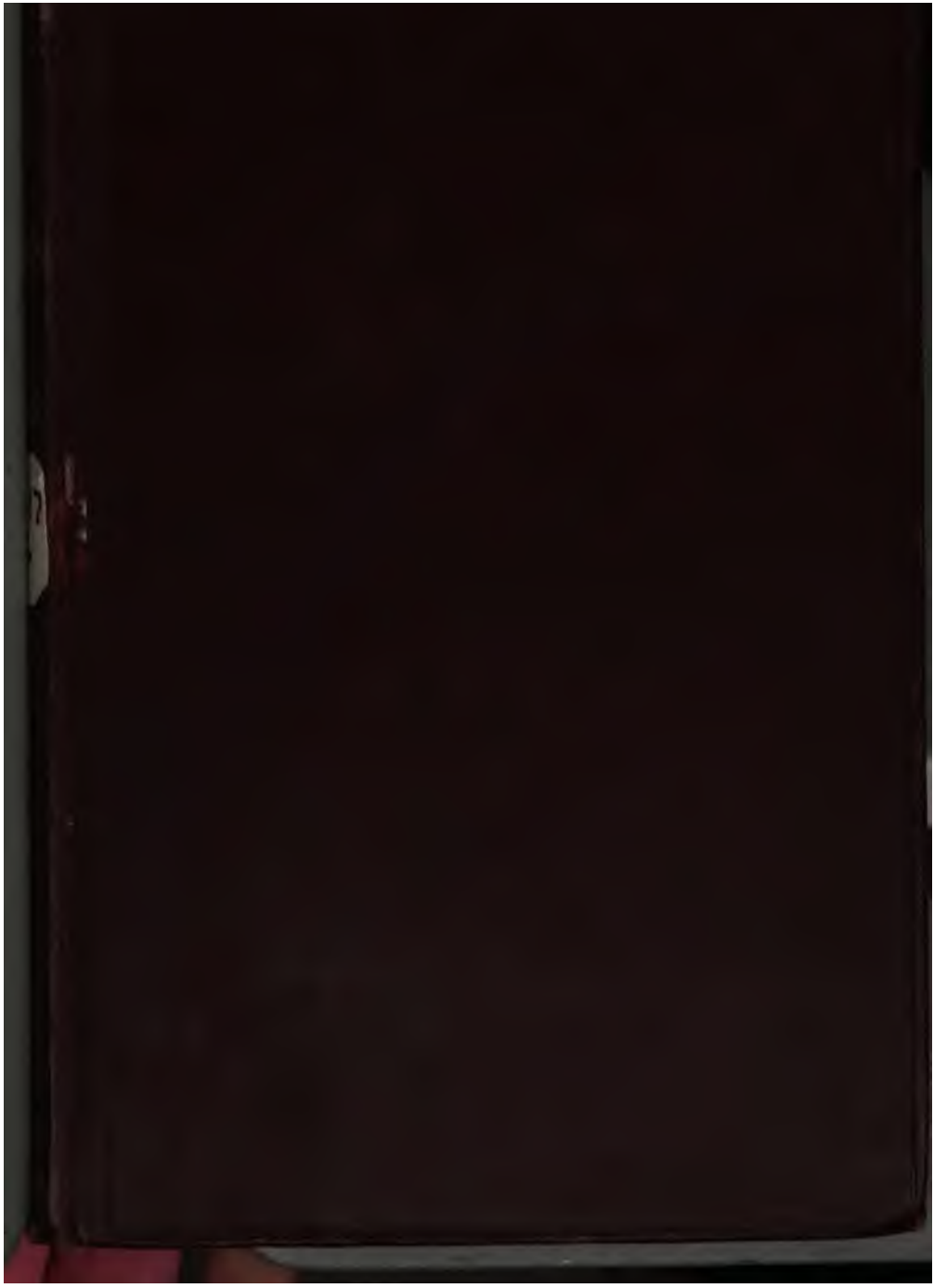

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FROM THE

SUBSCRIPTION FUND

BEGUN IN 1858

With Elia and His Friends

With Elia and His Friends

IN BOOKS AND DREAMS

BY

JOHN ROGERS

"Old ghosts whose day was done ere mine began,
If earth be seen from your conjectured heaven,
Ye know that History is half dream. . . .
. . . . On me
Frown not, old ghosts, if I be one of those
Who make you utter things you did not say,
And mould you all awry and mar your worth."

TENNYSON.

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1903

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TO

MY WIFE

IN MEMORY OF EARLY "WAND'RINGS WITH A FAIR-HAIR'D MAID."

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A WORD TO THE READER

You must look for only scant originality in this little book. You will find in it no epoch-making enunciations of truth—only a string of quiet recognitions of the comfort of home and the companionship of books. It is just a simple record of some hours of enjoyment spent by one whose path in life leads daily into the world, and who depends considerably on the peace which lingers in a library for health to enable him to do his work. He has found in books a respite from the world which nowadays, in bustling cities especially, is "too much with us"; and he thinks that others might perhaps also find it to

their advantage to realize that now and then it is advisable in some such manner to forget, "with pipe and book," the perplexities of mere money-making. He does not pretend to the insistent force of Emerson, who would have the world believe that what is true for one private heart is true for all men: he the rather inclines to the words of George Sand: "If you are involved in the interests and occupations of the world, you will throw down this volume impatiently. They who study what I write must be dreamers like myself."

Some who take up this booklet will pose in a superior manner and say: "Bah! the matter is stale; the illustrations are too well known: we want something crisp and new in these days." Well and good! but "to shift knowledge into more convenient positions is to render no unimportant service to mankind,"—at least

so thinks Professor Dowden; and some, we would fain believe, will not grumble at finding here "the old familiar faces" of which we never really tire for long. "Oh, dear; oh, dear!" once exclaimed Southey, "there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes."

Others, again, may look upon these pages as a mere catalogue of an armful of books in the writer's library. And isn't that something in these days when the things most loudly clamouring for attention are those "with money in them?" And is a catalogue in itself worth nothing in the face of the fact that its study has recently been recommended, in all good faith, to those conscious of mental debility, and incapable of grappling with the Shilling Novel? A book-catalogue "is not a mere catalogue or list of saleables, as the uninitiated may fancy. Even a common auctioneer's

catalogue of goods and chattels suggests a thousand reflections to a peruser of any knowledge. Judge then what the case must be with a catalogue of books."

You may mark as freely as you choose, gentle reader, the volumes named in the following pages, as we all do the desirable items in the catalogues we get from dealers monthly; but pray, set your desires in reality upon none of them. 'Tis a deadly sin to covet your neighbour's goods; and in addition to the eternal harm such an exercise might work in and for your own soul, it might hurt the writer and hasten his decease; for the determination of a strong will sometimes works sad havoc as it ripens to fruition. A book-lover has been known to turn angrily to a rival, who had out-bidden him at an auction, and declare that he would yet have the coveted volume,

which he actually did when, on the purchaser's death, his effects were sold.

De Quincey once said, that if Wordsworth needed a place or a fortune, the holder of that place or fortune was immediately served with a summons to surrender it; and he adds: "So certainly was this impressed upon my belief, as one of the blind necessities making up the prosperity and fixed destiny of Wordsworth, that, for myself, had I happened to know of any peculiar adaptation in an estate or office of mine to an existing need of Wordsworth's, forthwith, and with the speed of a man running for his life, I would have laid it down at his feet. 'Take it,' I should have said, 'Take it, or in three weeks I shall be a dead man.'"

To some born under the lucky star, all they set their hearts upon seems to gravitate in a mysterious manner. Re-

frain, therefore, lucky reader, from desiring my treasures; for, believe me, I have no desire to be translated just now, even to a Paradise prepared for book-lovers. My life and my books are sufficient for me at present.

I.

LAMB'S OWN BOOK-TREASURES.

ANYONE going the round of my library would of a surety pause before the shelves containing the volumes enriched by the autographs of Lamb and his friends which are to claim our attention in the following pages, for a ragged lot they are, forsooth! Money, perhaps, has been expended on the binding of many another book in the room, but these old friends have been left in the state in which they came here; and some, it must be confessed, are cracked in their bindings; others (in boards) have dilapidated labels or are minus their backs, and not a few are soiled. Moreover, the volumes have no connection with one another save that subtle one resulting from previous

ownership, and the pleasant associations called up thereby. But what would you have from Lamb's library, of which Crabb Robinson, describing the finest collection of shabby books he ever saw, said: "Such a number of first-rate works in very bad condition is, I think, nowhere to be found?"

Here is a glimpse of some of Lamb's treasures:—A Beaumont and Fletcher, from Barker's in Covent Garden, price 15s. ("or 16s.—was it?"); a Chaucer from some book-stall, at 9s. 2d.; a Montaigne or a Sir Thomas Browne at 2s.; a ragged duodecimo—*The Queen-like Closet, or Rich Cabinet*—discovered in rummaging over the contents of an old stall, at a half *book*, half *old-iron* shop in an alley leading from Wardour Street to Soho Square, and purchased for sixpence, because the little book had been the strange delight of his infancy. In all their delightful

heterogeneity rest Jeremy Taylor, Spinoza, some of the old English Dramatists, Prior, Sir Philip Sidney; *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, in sober state; Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, "great nature's stereotypes." "There Mr. Southey takes his place again with an old radical friend; here Jeremy Collier is at peace with Dryden; there the lion, Martin Luther, lies down with the greater lamb, Sewell; there Guzman d'Alfarache thinks himself fit company for Sir Charles Grandison, and has his claim admitted. Even the high fantastical Duchess of Newcastle, with her laurel on her head, is received with grave honours, and not the less for declining to trouble herself with the constitutions of her maids."

Shaftesbury was not too genteel for Lamb, nor Jonathan Wild too low. Thomson's *Seasons* looked best to him a little torn and dog's-eared; and he de-

lighted in the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance of an old circulating-library *Tom Jones* or *Vicar of Wakefield.* "Who would have them a whit less soiled?" he asks. Milton, Shakspeare, and Spenser were to him worthy a devotional exercise before being read. Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley were "the sweetest names," had a fine relish to his ear, and carried "a perfume in the mention." Izaak Walton hallowed "any page in which his reverend name appears"; his *Compleat Angler*—"quiet as in life by some stream-side," was the delight of Lamb's childhood and the companion of his later years.

"My heart yearns even now to those old books," wrote one who had known Lamb's library well. "Their faces seem all familiar to me, even their patches and blotches—the work of a wizened old

cobbler hard by—for little wotted Lamb of Roger Paynes and Charles Lewises. A cobbler was his book-binder, and the rougher the restoration the better." But, in the extremity which drove Lamb to seek a cobbler's services, he must have regretted not being able to strip "things in book's clothing," "books which are no books"—some "well-arranged assortment of blockheaded Encyclopædias," for instance—to comfortably re-clothe his shivering folios. "I never see these impostors," he confessed, "but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils."

To Mr. Carew Hazlitt, all book-lovers are indebted for his untiring endeavour to provide us with a catalogue of Lamb's library. In his *Charles and Mary Lamb* (1874), he re-printed the New York *Literary World* list of books which Moxon sold to the American firm of

Bartlett & Welford in 1848. In 1897, in *The Lambs*, and in 1900, in *Lamb and Hazlitt*, he continued his labour of love, considerably extending the original list, which, by the way, must still be far from complete if the collections of other Lamb-lovers are as rich in such treasures as the one now resting in the room in which I write. As to catalogues, the one before me is worthy the attention of collectors: it is a plain, paper-covered booklet, one of a hundred copies printed in New York, in 1897, for the Dibdin Club, with the title *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Charles Lamb*, and contains, in addition to two portraits, full particulars of the sixty volumes which found their way across the Atlantic, and were described on their arrival, some half-century ago, as a lot of the "shabbiest of all known volumes . . . a ragged remnant of that library which once adorned (its

nakedness more attractive than the gilding of Lewis or the tooling of Hayday) the walls of the room in the Temple where Hazlitt, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other choice spirits assembled."

What on earth possessed Moxon to part with those sixty treasures? and what spirit of mischief could have prompted him to destroy the remainder of the books which came into his possession at the death of Mary Lamb?

"Perhaps the most interesting to me of all the private libraries I have ever seen in England," said J. T. Fields, "was the small collection of Charles and Mary Lamb, which Edward Moxon, the publisher, unlocked for me when I was first in England, before the books were dispersed, as they never ought to have been. Then and there I lovingly handled his Kit Marlowe, his Drummond of Hawthornden, his Drayton, his Cowley,

and his Burton! I remember how Moxon's whole family stood around that *Life of the Duke of Newcastle by his Duchess*, and told stories of Lamb's enthusiasm over the book, a volume about which he has written: 'No casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.'"

As the books, so were the shelves. Referring to his local attachments, Lamb, writing to Wordsworth in 1801, mentions the book-case which had followed him about like a faithful dog wherever he had moved. In 1809 he tells Coleridge of his removal to No. 4, Inner Temple Lane. "I have put up my shelves," he says. "You never saw a book-case in more true harmony with the contents than what I've nailed up in a room which, though new, has more aptitudes for growing old than you shall often see."

Lamb had little sympathy with the

literature of his day. A new publication served only to make him return to his old loves with increased satisfaction. His spirit delighted in the authors of a past which to him was superlatively the golden age. Despite his confession of catholicity of taste, he found old Burton and Ben Jonson go better with his inseparable pipe than any of the moderns, including his best personal friends. Burns and Cowper, however, got near his heart: one was early the god of his idolatry, the other's chit-chat was "divine." "I cannot make these present times present to me," he said. "I read histories of the past and live in them." And if ever man lived in his books, Lamb did. "I dream away my life," he confessed, "in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me."

II.

AN IZAAK WALTON CHAPTER.

A "FINE Izaak Walton morning" greeted me on rising; and soon I was away out of the house, "careless as a beggar," "walking, walking ever till I fairly walked myself off my legs";—but not in the direction of the town; for all the conditions of the day moved me to quiet thoughts which did not accord with business. To anyone having the right to question me, I could have explained my conduct by saying that my time had been spent in making up "my accounts with Heaven and the company," though Heaven only knows what satisfaction such an excuse would have given any

"company" with its Board of Directors! Doubly sweet were the stolen hours—hours actually filched from old Mammon, forcibly abstracted from under the very nose of the grim despot ruling over gold and silver, commission and brokerage. The birds sang and the sky put on its best blue robe, making a veritable festival of my ramble along the river-path, through the long day's golden hours, until at length the declining sun turned my steps in the direction of home and the dinner-bell.

Later, with just sufficient of that pleasant tiredness which makes the mere act of resting the limbs a sweet experience, I am here in the study recalling the fair associations which bind together the names of Walton and Elia.

In one of his early letters, Lamb wrote to Coleridge: "I have just been reading

a book which I may be too partial to, as it was the delight of my childhood; but I will recommend it to you: it is Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*. All the scientific part you may omit in reading. The dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties, and will charm you. Many pretty old verses are interspersed." To this, Coleridge evidently made no response, for later in the same year (1796) Lamb returned to the subject: "Among all your quaint readings, did you ever light upon Walton's *Complete Angler?* I asked you the question once before. It breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart. There are many choice old verses interspersed in it. It would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it; it would Christianise every discordant angry passion. Pray make yourself acquainted with it." In 1801, Lamb wrote to Robert

Lloyd: "I shall expect you to bring me a brimful account of the pleasure which Walton has given you, when you come to town. . . . Are not you ambitious of being made an Angler? What edition have you got? Is it Hawkins's, with plates of Piscator, &c.? That sells very dear. I have only been able to purchase the last edition without the old plates which pleased my childhood; the plates being worn out, and the old Edition difficult and expensive to procure."

To me this letter to Lloyd is of considerable value, indicating as it does the possibility that the copy of the *Angler* now in my hands is the one referred to by Lamb as being then in his possession. "I have only been able," he says (to reiterate his statement), "to purchase *the last edition without the old Plates . . . . the plates being worn out.*" The last edition in 1801 was the 1797

Hawkins, published by Rivington, the Advertisement of which contains this statement: "As the plates have, in consequence of the number of impressions furnished from them for the preceding editions, become so worn as to be no longer any ornament to the work, it has been found necessary to omit them." Later, when Lamb removed to Enfield, his copy of the book served to foster, if indeed it did not create, a love of Walton and things pertaining to the gentle craft in the heart of Thomas Westwood the younger (1816-1888), who subsequently became an enthusiastic writer on Angling. Referring, years afterwards, to his boyhood and to the book, he says: "This was my chief treasure, my pearl of price; and, perched on the forked branch of an ancient apple-tree in the little, overgrown orchard, and at an elevation from which

I could almost catch a glimpse of the marshy levels of the Lea itself, it was my delight to sally forth with Piscator on that perennial May morning, to dib with him for 'logger-headed chub,' to listen to his discourse, to learn his songs by heart, to store up his precepts, and to steep my boyish mind in the picturesque darkness of his manifold superstitions." At this time Lamb was well able to afford any edition of Walton he might care to possess; and how characteristic of him would have been the gift to the lad of the volume his heart was so much in! We shall note a little further on that many books *were* given by Lamb to young Westwood. Anyhow, in 1834, when Lamb had left Enfield, and was living in Edmonton, his copy of *The Compleat Angler* was an illustrated one; for on February 14th of that year he tells Miss Fryer that Mrs. Moxon (his

Emma Isola) "has framed her three Walton pictures, and pretty they look . . . . She has my copy at present to do two more from."

My copy of *The Complete Angler* (or *Compleat*: which is it to be?) is this unillustrated one of 1797, with Thomas Westwood's book-plate in it.

When Charles and Mary Lamb first lived in Enfield they tenanted the house next that occupied by the Westwoods, the worthy couple who subsequently took them in as boarders when housekeeping on their own account was found to be wearying and unnecessary. "Our providers," writes Lamb to Wordsworth, in 1830, "are an honest pair, Dame Westwood and her husband. He, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher, within Bow-bells, retired since with something under a competence; . . . .

sighs only now and then, when he thinks that he has a son on his hands, about fifteen, whom, he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world; . . . . and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age."

It seems but part of the natural order of events that Lamb should thus describe his "providers" to Wordsworth; for, later on, when that Lake-poet visited Enfield, Lamb found that instead of the extra shilling usually charged for a friend's dinner, he had to pay eighteenpence for what Wordsworth had eaten. "But he's a great poet," said Lamb, expostulating. "I don't know anything about his being a great poet," returned Westwood, "but he eats a great lot."

To the son, who so loved Walton's book, Lamb gave these two little volumes

of Keightley's *Fairy Mythology* (William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828) which now rest before me, the first of which carries the inscriptions: "Miss Lamb, Enfield, with W. H. Ainsworth's best compts.," and: "T. Westwood, from C. Lamb." Writing in after years the latter recipient thus recalls his book-transactions with his next-door neighbour: "There were few modern volumes in his collection; and, *subsequently*, such presentation-copies as he received were wont to find their way into my own bookcase, and often through eccentric channels. A Leigh Hunt, for instant, would come skimming to my feet through the branches of the apple trees (our gardens were contiguous); or a Bernard Barton would be rolled down-stairs after me from the library-door. *Marcian Colonna* I remember finding on my window-sill, damp with the night's fog; and the *Plea*

of the Midsummer Fairies I picked out of the strawberry-bed."

But perhaps my *Fairy Mythology* was not transferred to the youthful poet's collection until after Lamb had taken up his abode under the Westwoods' roof. Perchance it occupied a place with Lamb's ragged folios in the little snuggery looking out on the garden, wherein was the library and the old engravings—the quiet nook where Lamb wrote several of the later *Essays of Elia!*

"My last meeting with Lamb," says Westwood, "took place at Edmonton shortly before his decease. We had a pleasant ramble. . . . Later in the evening, when the lamp was lit, I ventured to slip into his hands that worst of all literary scarecrows, a volume of manuscript juvenile verse."

A few days afterwards Lamb's grave was dug.

It seems rude justice for the Fates to thus squeeze verses out of the unoffending son of parents who had charged sixpence extra for a poet's dinner!

I hope Westwood's conscience gave him no trouble, during his long and useful life, on account of Lamb's death! Many less serious matters than tackling the verses of a rhyming lad have hurried men across life's border-line; and, as we have seen, Lamb lived but a few days after the task imposed on him by the poet.

In 1884, Westwood added to the already existing evidences of his love for old Izaak by publishing *Twelve Sonnets and an Epilogue*, as a bi-centenary tribute to the "father of anglers" (*ob.* 15th Dec., 1683). A presentation-copy of the book from the author, and several letters in his autograph, now lie before

me. In one of these he says: "The date (1884) was omitted (from the title-page) intentionally. I wish my sonnets to be associated with the proper date, 15th Dec., 1883, and in the absence of a conflicting date, they will be so. You can insert that date in your title, if you like; the sonnets were begun on the 15th, and completed ten days after. The publication was an afterthought." The offering is gracefully dedicated to the Master in these lines from Quarles:—

> "as before
> I left a Garland at thy Gates, once more
> I hang this Ivie at thy Postern-door."

One of the sonnets, entitled "Izaak and Elia," binds the two loved names together in these lines:—

> "Two great and good men oft have trod your ground,
> Old 'Totnam Hill'—one, Izaak, blythe of blee,
> Armed with the Fisher's pastoral panoply,

Panier and Angle-rod, lissome and round;—
The other, Elia, studious, quaint and fine,
With lustrous eye, brooding—one's fancy saith—
On 'spacious times of great Elizabeth,'
Peopled with retinue of Shades divine.
Izaak, I see, intent on mead and down—
On piping throstle and on blossomed spray;
But Elia's face is turned another way,
Drawn by the roar and tumult of the town.
Yet, did they meet, in sooth, those twain, what speech
Could gauge the gladness in the heart of each?"

An easy walk from the river where Walton fished and discoursed with his scholar, lies Lamb's holy land, with its "Blakesmoor in H——shire," its Mrs. Leicester's School, and its cottage of Rosamund Gray, in the modest library of which lay a copy of the *Complete Angler, or Contemplative Man's Recreation*, "with cuts."

What a blessed day this has been to me, with its rest and quiet! From my

heart I repeat with dear old Izaak the lines, "some say written by Sir Harry Wotton":—

"Could I be more than any man that lives,
Great, fair, rich, wise, all in Superlatives:
Yet I more freely would these gifts resign,
Then ever fortune would have made them mine,
And hold one minute of this holy leasure
Beyond the riches of this empty pleasure."

Here, in the silent night-time, I seek as preparation for sleep no ritual more elaborate than that provided by the simple prayer and exhortation with which Walton concludes his little book: "*Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.* And let the blessing of St. Peter's Master be with mine. And upon all that are lovers of *Vertue;* and dare trust in his *providence* and be quiet, and go a *Angling.*"

"*Study to be quiet.*"

. . . . . .

If it be that the memory of quiet hours by the riverside is the angler's best company when days divide him from the gentle sport, then surely to the lover of books one of the choicest recreations is a dreamy saunter with the Master in the pages of his volume, by sedgy Lea or silvery Thames, listening to his: "Well, my loving scholar," and his: "I'll tell you, scholar."

I like to think that this dumpy little book, now in my hand, went with good Izaak on some of his excursions. It is an exposition of the eighty-fourth Psalm, under the title *The Faith of The Church Militant*, translated by Thomas Rogers from the Latin of Nicholas Hemmingius, and printed "at London by H. Middleton for Andrew Maunsel anno. 1581." Inserted in it is the 1794 portrait of Walton, engraved by Bovi from the original picture by Houseman, then in

the possession of Mrs. Hawes "at Salisbury." On the title-page is the abbreviated name of the owner, "Ia: Wa:" in, I think, the Master's own handwriting, followed by the price paid for the book (*2s. 4d.*).

The volume bears evidence of having once been given to Mary Ackland by a certain Madam Chapman. Could she have been of the family of George Chapman, a possible possessor of the book, who died when Walton was forty-one years of age? If so, what an interesting group we get around the old volume, owned first by Izaak Walton (so loved by Lamb), and then by George Chapman, whose translation of *Homer* Leigh Hunt once saw Lamb kiss with lingering reverence!

"I have just finished Chapman's *Homer*," writes Lamb to Coleridge in 1802. "Did you ever read it? It has

the continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original. . . . Cowper's blank verse detains you every step with some heavy Miltonism; Chapman gallops off with you his own free pace." In a letter to Manning, in 1808, Lamb tells him that his *Adventures of Ulysses* "is done out of the *Odyssey*, not from the Greek (I would not mislead you), nor yet from Pope's *Odyssey*, but from an older translation of one Chapman." This determination to mislead no one caused Lamb to preface his little volume, when it appeared, with the confession: "The attempt is not to be considered as seeking a comparison with any of the direct translations of the *Odyssey*, either in prose or verse, though if I were to state the obligations which I have had to one obsolete version (the translation of *Homer* by Chapman in the reign of James I.), I should run the hazard of

depriving myself of the very slender degree of reputation which I could hope to acquire from a trifle like the present undertaking." The engraved title-page of the copy of *The Adventures of Ulysses* from which I have taken these words bears the imprint of the Juvenile Library, 41, Skinner Street; and facing it, loosely inserted, is a promissory-note written and signed by W. Godwin, and issued by him from this same 41, Skinner Street. It is but just to add that the endorsement shews that this was paid the day it became due.

Whatever doubts might suggest themselves to me as to Walton's ownership of *The Faith of the Church Militant*, there is no uncertainty about his connection with this other volume. It is a first edition (1670) of his *Lives of Dr. John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Mr. Richard Hooker, Mr. George Herbert,*

and has several corrections of the text in his handwriting. Further, on the upper margin of the portrait of Dr. Donne which fronts the title, in the autograph of Izaak Walton, is the name of the friend to whom he gave the book, Mr. Fra. Morley, to whom he afterwards bequeathed a ring in his will. All book-lovers will understand the eagerness with which I first compared old Izaak's writing of his friend's name in my precious volume with the name as it stands in the will, an admirable facsimile of which, by the way, has at length been published in Messrs. Freemantle's Winchester edition of *The Compleat Angler*. Following this eagerness of mine, came the sweets of satisfaction; for Walton's hand was evident in both, without the slightest doubt.

This Francis Morley was the nephew of Dr. George Morley, Bishop of Win-

chester; and the esteem in which Honest Izaak held him is shewn by his name appearing in the will immediately after those of Walton's brothers and sisters, first among friends, in the list of those who were to have memorial rings on his decease (those for his son Izaak, Dr. Hawkins and his wife, and the Bishop of Winchester being provided for separately). The following additional *data* will shew the happy associations clustering around the little book:—It is dedicated to the Bishop of Winchester (Dr. George Morley), one of Ben Jonson's twelve adopted sons and a very old friend of Walton's. On the Bishop's translation from the see of Worcester to that of Winchester, in 1662, he offered Walton a resting-place for his remaining days in the episcopal residence. From Walton's letters, we know he was at Winchester in 1670 and

1673: in the former of these years he published his *Lives*, the dedication of which contains the announcement that those of Herbert and Hooker were written under the Bishop's roof.

Close, indeed, must have been the friendship between Izaak Walton and the Morleys!

III.

A LAMB PRESENTATION-COPY—WITH GIFFORD AND OTHERS IN THE LAND OF SHADOWS.

In 1800, Lamb, writing to Manning, said: "Godwin I am a good deal pleased with. He is a very well-behaved, decent man; nothing very brilliant about him or imposing, as you may suppose . . . I was well pleased to find he has neither horns nor claws; quite a tame creature, I assure you: a middle-sized man, both in stature and in understanding; whereas, from his noisy fame you would expect to find a Briareus Centimanus, or a Tityus tall enough to pull Jupiter from his heavens."

We all know of Lamb's subsequent friendship with Godwin (although he damned the second Mrs. G.), and how, when in 1822 Godwin got into serious financial difficulties, Lamb himself gave one-third of the amount subscribed for his assistance. We also know of Godwin as the publisher of Lamb's volumes for children, and how the *Tales from Shakspeare* led to the suggestion that Lamb should edit a volume of *Specimens* from the old dramatists. To Manning, Lamb wrote under date February 26, 1808: "I have done two books since the failure of my farce; they will both be out this Summer. The one is a juvenile book—the *Adventures of Ulysses* . . . . The other is done for Longman, and is *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakspeare.* . . . . Longman is to print it, and be at all the expense and

risk, and I am to share the profits after all deductions; *i.e.* a year or two hence I must pocket what they please to tell me is due to me. But the book is such as I am glad there should be. It is done out of old plays at the Museum, and out of Dodsley's collection, etc. It is to have notes."

In due course Lamb sent a copy of the *Specimens* to Godwin, inscribed "From the editor," in his autograph; and this is the book now before me. At the top of the page containing the "Table of Reference to the Extracts" Godwin has written: "Of the plays ticked in this Table, there had been no modern edition." This cannot fail to remind one of another excursion by Godwin into the world of the Old Dramatists, caused by his seeing a quotation from Lamb's *John Woodvil.* Struck with the beauty of the passage,

and failing to recollect where he had previously come across it, he instituted a great search to satisfy his awakened curiosity. After wading through Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and many other likely authors, he sent to Lamb to know if he could assist him.

One of the plays ticked by Godwin is Ford's *Broken Heart*; and to this fact, joined presumably to the stormy state of the weather which caused me to leave my work to gather myself up into the lazy cosiness possible before the warmth and light of a cheery wood-fire, I owe the experience of the evening. My mind ran on the chapter on "Winter Quarters" in Kit North's *Recreations*, in which he says:—"To us utter idlesse is perfect bliss. And why? Because, like a lull at sea, or *lown* on land, it is felt to descend from Heaven on man's toilsome lot. The lull

and the lown, what are they when most profound, but the transcient cessation of the restlessness of winds and waters —a change wrought for an hour of peace in the heart of the hurricane! Therefore the sailor enjoys it on the green wave — the shepherd on the greensward; while the memory of mists and storms deepens the enchantment. Even so, Idlesse can be enjoyed but by those who are permitted to indulge it, while enduring the labours of an active or a contemplative life." —I had got so far when forgetfulness threw her mantle over me.

To those of us who live much among dreams there comes at rare intervals experience of the world of shadows. The thin curtain is drawn aside, and we are permitted to wander in the land where time and space are not. Such gracious freedom from the tyranny of

the actual is variable as the wind of Heaven; it defies prediction and mocks at preparation; it is in no way to be calculated upon and is not the result of expectation.

A moment's forgetfulness of self, and I had passed beneath the uplifted curtain. Desolate, wind-swept space lay around me; and in the gloaming, hurrying shapes sped to and fro' in robes of mist. To these succeeded others more leisurely in their movements. Then came a group of sober aspect; and as it drew near I recognised many who had once borne great names on earth. I saw that they were as strangers to each other; that they knew not their present estate. Walking as in a dream, each in his own little world of remembered thought, they awaited the time when the finger of the Almighty should touch them to fresh perceptions

and wider experiences, and awake in them a recognition of the present. The spell of the Mid-way House was upon them; the past was their all, the present a blank, the future without beckoning hands. They talked; and, listening to their babble, I knew the reason of their strange unconscious association.

The first words I heard came from a little deformed ghost with angry countenance and querulous voice. His soliloquy proclaimed his identity. William Gifford, sometime editor of the *Quarterly Review*, was repeating unpleasant phrases he had once used, or suffered to be used, and which could not be blotted from the pages of the book of life written by himself in his own memory. So ran the tale he told himself anew :—

"The old Dramatists! My Massinger and Ben Johnson; my Ford! Not Weber's—no, not Weber's; for he has

polluted his pages with the blasphemies of a poor maniac who once published some detached scenes of the *Broken Heart*."

The wave of thought which thus found expression passed from one to the other in the group, and I heard after a preliminary stammer these words :—

"The six weeks that finished 1795 and began '96, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite anyone. But mad I was ; and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all were told. Dream not of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad!"

The shade was Charles Lamb ; his confession and his inimitable quaint hesitation of utterance were sufficient indication of his identity apart from his spare

small figure crowned with the god-like brow.

Again came the querulous piping of Gifford :—

"For this unfortunate creature, every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation; but for Mr. Weber—."

"Mr. Baviad Gifford! Mr. Shoemaker Gifford!! Cobbler Gifford!!!" repeated Lamb, as a school-boy his lesson, walking alone absorbed in his task. "Bully Dawson kicked by half the town, and half the town kicked by Bully Dawson. This was true distributive justice."

At this point a great sorrow overspread the features of Gifford, for acute remorse had seized upon him. There was genuine trouble in his voice, and his words came quickly as if hastening to repair some great wrong :—

"I call God to witness that in the whole course of my life I never heard one syllable of Mr. Lamb or his family. I knew not that he ever had a sister, or that he had parents living, or that he or any person connected with him had ever manifested the slightest tendency to insanity. In a word, I declare to you, *in the most solemn manner*, that all I ever knew or ever heard of Mr. Lamb was merely his name. Had I been aware of one of the circumstances which you mention, I would have lost my right arm sooner than have written what I have."

Lamb was still continuing his old memories:—

"I am a poor nameless egotist, who have no vanity to consult by my 'Confessions of a Drunkard.' I know not whether I shall be laughed at, or heard seriously. Such as they are, I commend

them to the attention of anyone, if he find his own case in any way touched."

Again the voice of the whilom *Quarterly* editor, responsible for every word printed in his review :—

"A fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance, which we happen to know is a true tale."

Then Lamb—

"That accursed *Quarterly Review* and its gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the 'Confessions of a Drunkard' was a genuine description of the state of the writer! Little things, that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is insured." Then, after a pause: "Scotchmen ought to suffer a double punishment in the other world, fire without brimstone."

Here a strange thing occured. For

his old friend Wordsworth, Lamb mistook Gifford, and into his ear he proceeded to pour the tale of his trouble :—

" I told you my review of your *Excursion* was a very imperfect one. But what you will see in the *Quarterly* is a spurious one, which Mr. Baviad Gifford has palmed upon it for mine. I never felt more vexed in my life than when I read it. I cannot give you an idea of what he has done to it, out of spite at me, because he once suffered me to be called a lunatic in his Review. The *language* he has altered throughout, putting his shoemaker phraseology (for he was a shoemaker) instead of mine, which has been tinctured with better authors than his ignorance can comprehend. Were I St. Crispin, Wordsworth, this is the sonnet I would pen to Gifford :—

" All unadvised, and in an evil hour,
Lured by aspiring thoughts, my son, you daft

The lowly labours of the Gentle Craft
For learned toils, which blood and spirits sour.
All things, dear pledge, are not in all men's power;
The wiser sort of shrub affects the ground;
And sweet content of mind is oftener found
In cobbler's parlour, than in critic's bower.
The sorest work is what doth cross the grain;
And better to this hour you had been plying
The obsequious awl with well-waxed finger flying,
Than ceaseless thus to till a thankless vein;
Still teazing Muses, which are still denying;
Making a stretching-leather of your brain."

The little warped ghost, mistaken for Wordsworth, shuddered and seemed to grow frailer and more shrivelled. His insignificance appeared all the more pronounced contrasted with the powerful form, large-limbed and tall, of him whose talk was next heard; for Christopher North was among the shades.

"Where could you find a bitterer, more venomous body, than old Gifford? Yet

he is universally respected, for his bitterness changed many a scribbling blockhead into an inoffensive man, and he spat his venom chiefly on corroded Cockneys, whom it was pleasant to see writhing in the dead-thraws. His friends know him to be one of the best of enlightened and religious men; and as his Quarterly accounts have long been found correct, so will his accounts of all sorts pass at the last general audit."

The little shape, catching an echo of this, became less pitiful to behold.

Crusty Christopher, not so crusty in his present condition of ghostliness, continued his tale:—

"Charles Lamb ought really not to abuse Scotland in the pleasant way he so often does in the sylvan shades of Enfield; for Scotland loves Charles Lamb; but he is wayward and wilful in his wisdom, and conceits that many a

Cockney is a better man even than Christopher North. But what will not Christopher forgive to genius and goodness?"

Thoughts of Gifford, of what he had done and said, still continued to circle around the group, reviving old memories and forcing them into speech. He whom I knew to be Leigh Hunt by his tall lithe figure and quiet contemplative movements, ever and anon changing under quick impulse to animated decision, began reciting from his *Ultra-crepidarius*, the desolate eyes of his ghostship waking up, meanwhile, with the fire of battle, moderated, however, by an occasional gleam of humour, as if a sense of the fun of it all shot at intervals through his imprisoned soul. This is what I heard:—

"Be these the court-critics and vamp a Review.
And by a poor figure, and therefore a true,

For it suits with thy nature, both shoe-like and slaughterly
Be its hue leathern, and title the *Quarterly*,
Much misconduct; and see that the others
Misdeem, and misconstrue, like miscreant brothers;
Misquote, and misplace, and mislead, and misstate,
Misapply, misinterpret, misreckon, misdate,
Misinform, misconjecture, misargue; in short,
Miss all that is good, that ye miss not the Court."

A little mean-looking ghost, bearing traces of the peevishness born of untoward circumstances, but carrying the unconquered soul of William Hazlitt, had been awaiting his opportunity, and here he seized it:—

"You have an ugly trick, William Gifford, of saying what is not true of anyone you do not like. It is time you were told what you are. You are a little person, but a considerable cat's-paw. The distinction between truth and false-

hood you make no account of. To crawl and lick the dust is all your patrons expect of you, and all you can do. The want of all manly and candid feeling in yourself only excites your suspicion and antipathy to it in others. Of an humble origin yourself, you recommend your performances to persons of fashion by always abusing *low people*, with the smartness of a lady's waiting-woman, and the independent spirit of a travelling tutor. Your over-weening self-complacency is never easy but in the expression of your contempt for others. There is an innate littleness and vulgarity in all you do. Such, Sir, is the picture of which you have sat for the outline—all that remains is to fill up the little, mean, crooked, dirty details."

By this time the atmosphere had grown very thick and objects difficult to discern. An angel, coming to meet the

little knot of talkers, beckoned them on out of the region of gray memories to fields of new experience on which the sunlight lay; and I was left alone.

IV.

A FIRST EDITION OF ELIA—LAMB AT HOME.

THE volume from which I have just been reading is of great interest to me. It is a first edition of *Elia* (Taylor and Hessey, 1823), and has inserted in it the original key, in Lamb's autograph, to the characters of the immortal essays, written on a simple leaf of hand-made paper, bearing Whatman's water-mark, similar to that used by Lamb in the letters penned to his friends from the desk in the India House. The list of initials and asterisks was made out by Lamb's fellow-clerk Pitman, and against each item Lamb has written his interpre-

tation, affixing his signature at the foot. Beneath is a note in Pitman's autograph to this effect: "The portrait of the author, which fronts the Title-page, was the best extant in 1823: it presents a general likeness of the original in the head and the lankness of figure, as well as in the bygone fashion of his black dress; but it is very bad in the proportions, for Lamb is no more than five feet and five inches in height. R. B. Pitman."

I do not, for one instance, consider the document compacted solely of truth. The manuscript bears evidence of hesitation and re-consideration—there are in fact actual alterations in it by Lamb after it was apparently finished. Anyhow, it is the only thing of the kind existing, and has proved of considerable assistance to Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt, in his *Mary and Charles Lamb*, and to Canon Ainger in his edition of the *Essays of Elia*, in the

admirable notes to which we find repeated reference to Lamb's "Key," which he considers "an authentic clue to most of the initials or asterisks employed in the first series of *Elia*." Concerning the actual document, he says: "I can vouch for the handwriting, phraseology, and (it may be added) the spelling, being indubitably Lamb's."

It is valuable also as further evidence of that kindly feeling of Lamb's towards some of his colleagues in the office, which showed itself in his sitting to Joseph, the artist, for the portrait necessary to enable his fellow-clerk Evans to complete the extra-illustration of his copy of Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

I like to humour myself by imagining this precious manuscript connected with some such pleasant picture of Lamb at home as the following, anachronistic though it be:—

At Colebrook Cottage.

Characters.

Charles Lamb, the literary clerk of the India House.

Mary Lamb, his sister.

George Dyer, poet and dreamer.

R. B. Pitman, an India House clerk.

Scene.

Colebrook Cottage, Colebrook Row, Islington; left hand from Sadler's Wells; a detached whitish house, with the New River running in front.

Time.

A summer afternoon and evening.

Mary Lamb, *a little bunch of an old lady, pale of face, with brown eyes, soft and expressive, placid in appearance, square of feature and strong in bodily frame, is sitting comfortably huddled up in*

the little dining-room with its walls studded over and rough with old books—an old folio lies open on her knees.

Enter CHARLES LAMB *(home from his duties at the office)—small of stature, with frame slight and fragile; shoulders a trifle bent, but surmounted by a head of form and character the most noble and sweet; hair black, threaded with gray, curling crisply about an expanded forehead; eyes softly brown, sad in repose but of varying expression when roused by emotion; nose of Jewish cast. His figure, in tight-fitting suit of clerk-like black, appears to dwindle down from the magnificent head, worthy of Aristotle, to almost immaterial legs clad in black small-clothes and gaiters. His face evidences deep thought shot through with humour; its lines are those of suffering wreathed with mirth.*

A red rose, withered by the day's experience, droops at his button-hole.

At sight of his sister his face lights up with the sadly-sweet smile to which his friends refer with loving emphasis and delight; and with the pleasant little stammer which is just enough to prevent his making speeches, and sufficiently marked to cause one to listen carefully for his words, he greets her with:—

"Ah, M-Mary, browsing on the old Beau-Beaumont and Fletcher!"

MARY (*in the soft and persuasive voice which, with its slight check and captivating earnestness, gives a charm to her mode of speech when addressing those she loves*):—"Yes, Charles, our old friend from Covent Garden Barker. I like to mind the inside of the book; but I also like to have it near me for the sake of the old days when we were not quite so rich. Do you

remember the brown suit which you made to —"

LAMB (*interrupting her*):—"B-But do *you* remember how we hung about old B-Barker's for weeks before we could really feel that we might afford to buy it? A Saturday night, wasn't it, M-Mary —and ever so late? How the old m-man grumbled at the almost midnight deal! B-But he was none the less ready to hand over the precious old folio in exchange for that m-mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?"

MARY:—"Sixteen, I think, Charles."

LAMB:—"But p-put the book aside and let us go out into the sunshine. H-Here in the house—and we never had a whole house of our own before, Mary—I feel like some g-great lord; in the garden, I am Adam in Eden. B-But if I am Adam, who are you, Mary? You can't well be Eve; you

must be M-Miss Adam — B-Bridget Adam—eh?"

MARY:—"Yes, Charles, I'll be Bridget Adam."

(They go out together into the pretty garden in the rear of the house, in full bloom, well stocked with vegetables, fruit-trees, and flowers.)

LAMB:—"This is fair and good; Daddy W-Wordsworth's lines might well have been written for us:—

'Life with yon Lambs, like day, is just begun,
Yet nature seems to them a heavenly guide.
Does joy approach? they meet the coming tide,
And sullenness avoid.'"

(He sits down, smiling the while he stammers to himself something about "W-Wordsworth's young sheep." *A few sparrows, after flying cautiously around, as if to ascertain who the garden visitors are, alight on the grass and hop about.)*

"Ah, here are my birds! (*gesticulates playfully in their direction, and declaims, with a sly glance at his sister*):—

"Then sing ye, birds, sing, sing a joyful song!
And let the young Lambs bound."

(His face grows serious, and he repeats as if musing aloud):—

"What reason first imposed thee gentle name,—
Name that my father bore, and my sire's sire,
Without reproach? . . . .
Whate'er the fount whence thy beginnings came,
No deed of mine shall shame thee, gentle name."

(addressing his sister):—

"Dost r-remember, Mary, how the poor old dad loved me to read to him his 'Sp-Sparrow's Wedding' when he was nigh too infirm to take interest in aught save our eternal g-game of cribbage?"

MARY:—"Yes, Charles!—but let the old days pass! you often say the wind is tempered to the shorn Lambs."

LAMB (*after a pause in which he watches a mimic battle between some sparrows for the possession of a crust of bread*):—"Commend me to the sp-sparrows for what M-Mathews, in his 'At Home,' calls 'irregular appropriation.' How f-free the little beg-beggars are! But not so free as I should be were I but rid of Leadenhall, with a competence in my f-fob. How I would prance and curvet it—'b-bound,' as do our Lake-poet's 'young Lambs'—and p-pick up cowslips, and ramble about with no p-purpose more serious than pure selfish enjoyment.

"But talking of the of-office reminds me that I have asked Pitman up to-night to play whist with George D-Dyer."

MARY:—"Who is Mr. Pitman, Charles?"

LAMB:—"O-One of our cl-clerks in the House."

MARY :—" But why ask him instead of some other and older friend?"

LAMB :—" P-Pitman has always been obliging and civil. When the smoking-club at D-Don Saltero's was b-broken up, he offered me all the ornaments, wh-which I declined, and therefore I asked him h-here to-night. I never could bear to give pain (*an expression of fun creeps over his face*). Was I not called the g-gentle hearted Charles when young; shall I now derogate?"

Later in the evening.

(CHARLES *and* MARY *are sitting in the lightsome upstairs drawing-room, with its three windows. The walls are covered with prints—portraits of the poets, Hogarths in old-fashioned ebony frames, engravings after Poussin, Raphael, and Titian, whilst on the mantelpiece stand Chelsea-china shepherds and shepherdesses.*

Sounds are heard on the steps leading up from the street-level to the door.)

LAMB (*rising and going to the window*): —"Ah, here comes P-Pitman!"

(Enter a tall, intelligent-looking man, of middle-age and pleasing appearance, gentlemanly in person and dress, who is cordially welcomed by Lamb and introduced to Mary.)

LAMB (*addressing himself to Pitman*): —"We have asked George D-Dyer to come in for an hour or so this evening: h-have you ever met him?"

PITMAN:—"No; I don't think I have ever seen him even."

LAMB:—"I verily b-believe he is the only man ever b-born without original sin—the d-dear, fine, s-silly old angel that he is, only wanting w-wings! It would sweeten any m-man's temper at any time to come across G-George Dyer. B-But you want me to do s-something

for you, Pitman; wh-what is it, my b-boy?"

PITMAN (*hesitatingly producing the* Elia *volume from his pocket*):—"I hardly like to trouble you, Mr. Lamb, but I want to make my copy of your book more complete than anyone else's. (*He opens the volume*). I have got Pulham to give me a portrait to face the title-page, and I should be so much obliged if you could some day find a little time to fill in the names of the characters of the Essays against the initials I have copied out on this piece of paper."

LAMB (*with a quiet grim smile of satisfaction at having caught a culprit*):—"I am surp-prised at you, you rascal! (*holding the paper up to the light*). Like my garden-sparrows you've b-been indulging in 'irregular appro-priation.' This is India House p-paper, Sir—Wh-Whatman w-water-marked—which points to

the very sad fact that you've been w-wasting valuable office-time as well as office-stationery. This has b-been written out b-by you within the Leadenhall walls s-sometime between the hours of ten and four. As one of the p-pillars of the House, I am b-bound to say this w-will never do."

PITMAN (*smiling, well knowing the liberties taken by Lamb himself with both office-time and office-stationery*) :—" I am truly sorry, Mr. Lamb."

LAMB :—" Your p-prompt repentance is very t-touching, I assure you. Very w-well, Pitman, I must do w-what you ask; but you must not depend im-implicitly on the accuracy of w-what I write. It must be taken with some abatement, l-leaving room for the imagination. I am n-not a matter-of-fact m-man, because, forsooth, I desire to be left w-with some shreds of respectability; and all

true history, you kn-know, is f-full of scandal and stark wickedness."

(Enter GEORGE DYER—*a gaunt awkward individual, lean as Cassius, with rusty black coat as much too large for him as his trousers are too short. His long head is silvered over with short hair lying flat and regular in patches, elsewhere standing out straight, stiff, and defiant. But all this oddness is forgotten when one looks into his dark eyes lighted up with faith and wonder.*

Friendly greetings pass between him and the Lambs, and Pitman is introduced to him.)

LAMB (*with his humourous puckering of face*):—"I have just b-been telling Mr. P-Pitman all about your attempt at self-destruction in o-our river, M-Master Dyer—and j-just in front of our h-hospitable door too! Fie, G-George, fie!

You might in all d-decency have gone a little f-further d-down out of our sight, and there tried to w-wipe yourself out, d-dear old *Cancellarius Magnus.*"

MARY (*half in reproach, with an emotional stress in her breathing*):—"Oh, Charles!"

LAMB:—"B-But what puzzles me, George, is how, w-when it was all over and y-you safe in bed, you c-could have fancied yourself drunk, when the D-Doctor had tasted away nearly all the good c-cognac that w-was in your glass, before y-you got even a s-sip. And the magnificent w-way in which you b-burst out into little fragments of chanting ends of d-deliverance hymns—n-not remembered b-before since childhood, I d-dare swear! It was quite sufficiently s-solemn a service of m-music to introduce one t-to a reading of M-Milton. D-Dost remember, George, with w-what solicitude we

listened next d-day to the tale of all the s-sore throbbings of thy learned h-head?"

DYER:—"You make it appear much more serious than it really was, Charles."

LAMB:—"N-No, George, no! W-Why Mary has had nothing b-but water in her head o'nights ever since."

MARY:—"Charles!"

LAMB:—"I p-protest, George, you shall not venture out again—n-not even by daylight—w-without a sufficient pair of spectacles—in your m-musing m-moods especially! You m-might disappoint the Government, who h-have not yet altered their m-minds as to r-raising you to the p-peerage as becomes the d-dignity of Lord-Lord-Lord—"

MARY:—"Stanhope, Charles."

LAMB:—"Yes! Lord Stanhope's ex-executor."

DYER (*with a strange mixture of earnest seriousness and quivering vanity*):—

"O, dear no! I could not think of such a thing, I assure you. I hope not; indeed, indeed, I hope not! it would not suit me at all."

LAMB:—"And w-why not? *I* expect s-some s-such a thing for myself—not a-all at once, of course, as in y-your case. The steps in m-my ladder w-will be something of this kind: S-Sir Charles Lamb, Baronet (I have al-already climbed up o-over plain Ch-Charles Lamb and Mr. Charles Lamb to Ch-Charles Lamb, Esquire); Baron Lamb of Stamford; Viscount Lamb; E-Earl Lamb; M-Marquis Lamb; D-Duke Lamb. I don't think I could spare time to go further up, otherwise I m-might advance to K-King Lamb; Em-Emperor Lamb; and even to P-Pope Innocent, beyond which there is n-no higher rung to cl-climb."

DYER (*very seriously*):—"But I am going to remain George Dyer simply—

at least if my prayers will avail me anything with the Government."

LAMB (*now sufficiently excited to free himself from his natural defect of speech*): —"You won't have the chance of remaining anything but a corpse, George Dyer, if you go on as at present, poring into Greek contractions, and star-gazing upon slim Hebrew points. You must *not* run after midges and motes, to catch them; you *must* leave off hunting for needles in bundles of hay; for all these things strain the eyes and make them incapable of recognising even our New River—and we cannot rescue you twice; you will have to go your own way next time.

"But to our rubber of whist! It grows dark!" (*Rises and goes to the bell-pull—Mary's eyes following him the while—stammering to himself as he crosses the room*):—"A clear fire, a clean hearth,

and the rigour of the game—Oh, Martin, Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd hold!"

(*To the maid who has answered the bell*):—"Betty, bring the candles!"

V.

SOME EDITIONS OF LAMB'S BOOKS.

THERE is something in the staid simplicity of a first edition *Elia* that makes it a satisfying possession apart from considerations of rarity. Open the book and note its solidity and old-world charm, its eminent respectability if you care so to term it. Its binding? If possible, we would of course have it in its original boards, clean and firm; if not—well! let Lamb himself be our guide. "To be strong-backed and neat-bound is," he says, "the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately.

. . . In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding . . . but where a book is at once both good and rare . . . no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel." The evident commonsense of such a statement appeals to everyone who owns and reads books.

There is one point on which, I think, all lovers of books, as well as critics of the printed page, will agree, and that is that the *format* of Lamb's several works, issued during his life-time, was at least appropriate. But how few copies of these remain to us in their pristine condition! and what are they among the many who desire to possess them?

Why does no enterprising publisher give us a facsimile issue of the first editions of all Lamb's works? The type, binding, and illustrations of some late

reproductions of the Juvenile books are admirable; but why not the two *Elias* as they appeared in 1823 and 1833, in the appropriate clothing of boards? With such, we should want no introductions, no elucidative notes—just the volumes in their original simplicity. "Let *Elia* come forth bare as he was born!" Lamb thought there was no more heartless sight than a reprint of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. "What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion?" 'Tis in no "winding-sheet of the newest fashion" we would enshroud Lamb, although he has been so done very considerably of recent years.

A collector of Lamb, finds himself, with regard to illustrated editions, in a position "between the devil and the deep sea." He has either to render his entire

devotion to the counterfeit presentments by one artist, "to be tied down to an authentic face," or else to permit his brain to be turned into a literary lumber-room, piled ceiling-high with a maddening heterogeneity of dethroned idols, gathered here, there, and everywhere. An experience of this latter kind drew from Lamb his Shakspeare complaint: "What injury did not Boydell's *Shakspeare Gallery* do me with Shakspeare? To have Opie's Shakspeare, Northcote's Shakspeare, light-headed Fuseli's Shakspeare, heavy-headed Romney's Shakspeare, wooden-headed West's Shakspeare, deaf-headed Reynolds's Shakspeare!"

Luckily the days are gone in which a father choosing a gift for his child would say at sight of any "pretty" book: "Oh, this will do well enough for the bairn!" and publishers have

not been backward in providing for this changed attitude — "growth" if you please, good masters! We cheerfully admit, in spite of what we have written, that some of the editions of Lamb's books for children are admirable; and we can think of no more dainty gift of its kind than, say, *Mrs. Leicester's School*, illustrated by Miss Winifred Green and published by Messrs. Dent, and *Tales from Shakspeare*, with pictures by Mr. W. Paget, which Mr. Earnest Nister sends out.

As regards Lamb for children of a bigger growth—and to enjoy the delightful Elia to the full, much of the childlike mind must remain to us—it is not so simple a matter to decide. All that Canon Ainger has touched satisfies us at one point or another; whilst the *edition de luxe* of Messrs. Macmillan is, as was intended, a treasure. We must not omit

mention of the pocket *Essays* and *Last Essays*, edited by Mr. W. J. Craig, and the two volumes with Mr. Birrell's Introduction and Mr. Brock's charming pictures, also from the house of Messrs. Dent. These are things to be thankful for, to say grace over.

The problem of suitable, and therefore satisfying, illustration has not, to our thinking, been yet solved. The artist, to make a success of work in connection with Lamb's books—take the *Essays* for example—must be a man of many parts indeed. Among other qualifications, he must love his subject supremely, be Lamb-intoxicated in fact. He should have an intimate acquaintance with everything written by Lamb, and with a great deal that has been written about him. Every line and lineament of the half-dozen portraits we have of him, with all their pictorial possibilities, must

be familiar material, as also what can be gleaned of his homes, haunts, surroundings. Some knowledge must also be possessed of what his friends looked like —Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the rest —for assuredly they must be fitly introduced with something like verisimilitude. He must be gifted with an imagination realistic enough to "resolve itself into the elements which it contemplates," and with a sufficiently just sense of proportion and fitness to enable him to rescue all he touches from the deadly grip of the commonplace. Preeminently a master of the technicalities of pen-and-ink work, his style must penetrate the idea like the point of a lancet. With it all he must be faithful to his type, yet of infinite resource. Having at all cost realised his Charles Lamb, he must be stubbornly truthful in his repeated portrayals of him: if he

gives us but a back view of say a portion of his coat, it must be indubitably Lamb's and his alone; there must be no room for even momentary doubt about it. The character of Elia must be evident in a crease. Look at Dana Gibson's *Widow and her Friends*; turn at random to any of the plates; the personality of each individual is unmistakable, no matter what attitude or position he is in.

If the modern reader *will* have an edited and illustrated edition of Lamb, let him arrange, if possible, for it to be published by an amalgam of Messrs. Macmillan and Messrs. Dent, edited by a composite Canon Ainger and Mr. Lucas, and illustrated by Messrs. Brock and Herbert Railton, skilfully contrived to sit under one coat on one stool.

VI.

A FIRST ELIA, *Continued.*

ALSO inserted in my copy of *Elia* is a letter, in Lamb's autograph, addressed to "Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, Booksellers, Fleet Street, for J. Taylor Esqre.," bearing the post-date July 21, 1821, and referring to his "Imperfect Sympathies," which appeared in the following issue of the *London Magazine*. Taylor and Hessey, it will be remembered, were the publishers of both the *London Magazine*, in which the *Elia* essays first appeared, and of the volume made up of these papers when gathered together in 1823; so that it is with a certain sense of fitness such a letter rests

in such a book. "The *London Magazine* [so runs the letter] is chiefly pleasant to me because some of my friends write in it." Then, following a reference to Hazlitt's connection with it, comes this remarkable confession—especially remarkable when we consider the quality of the work yet to come from the writer's pen—"For myself, I feel almost exhausted, but I will try me (*sic*) hand a little longer." At this point, a recollection seems to have flashed upon Lamb of a slip of his pen in the essay about to be published. "For God's sake," he writes, "change *Sisera* to *Jael*."

To me these scraps in Lamb's autograph are very precious. "As I hold them in my hand, and remark the fair, smooth, legible, half-prim, clerkly writing, the heavy mercantile paper of the old India House, with the edges rough, and the grey-and-yellowish hue which has

stolen over them with time—I place my hand where his hand must have rested; I think of that genial genius, that true and charitable heart, that long life of silent heroism . . . I am brought very near to him as I look at them. It is like passing him in the Strand, or seeing him look up to a friend from his desk at the India House, and hearing him say with a smile and a stammer: 'Good Morning!'"

VII.

SOME LAMB-TREASURES BELONGING TO OTHER FOLK.

WHEN Lamb removed to Enfield, George Daniel helped him to arrange his darling folios in the pleasant dining-room, and to hang in the most suitable light his portraits of the poets and his ebony-framed Hogarths. Occasionally Lamb visited Daniel at Canonbury Square, at which times Daniel hid away his unique black-letter volumes and morocco bindings, and produced "the one particular book of old songs and ballads for his illustrious but wet-fingered and dog's-earing visitor: for Daniel was a bibliomaniac, and had uniques without number, and copies in old morocco; and to have let Elia 'paw' any of these would have

destroyed D.'s peace of mind for the rest of his days." Daniel well knew that Thomson's *Seasons* looked best to his visitor "a little torn and dog's-eared," and that "the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance" of a circulating library *Tom Jones* or *Vicar of Wakefield* were "beautiful" to him who could write in this strain: "If you find the Milton in certain parts dirtied and soiled with a crumb of right Gloucester blacked in the candle (my usual supper), or, peradventure, a stray ash of tobacco wafted into the crevices,—look to that passage more especially: depend upon it, it contains good matter."

That Daniel did value and care for his books with all the tender solicitude of a lover is evidenced by the condition of the little volume from his library which I possess, and to which I shall have occasion to refer in another place.

What we love is, to us, always the best of its kind, and its possession makes us infinitely richer than our neighbours. Emerson once said: "I visit occasionally the Cambridge Library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of all is already within the four walls of my study at home." This conviction I should like to share as the result of personal experience; but alas! this priced Catalogue of the Library of George Daniel, sold by Messrs. Sotheby in July, 1864, reminds me of volumes resting now on alien shelves which should have been mine: they are set forth as Lot 990, and were knocked down for £6. 15*s*. Here is the auctioneers' entry:—

"LAMB (Charles) PROSE WORKS, 3 vol. *portrait of the author by Meyer, two others added*

"WITH A DELIGHTFULLY CHARACTERISTIC

AUTOGRAPH LETTER ABOUT 'ROAST PIG,' addressed to Mrs. Collier of Smallfield Place, East Grinstead, Sussex; and a long autograph Letter from Bernard Barton (the Quaker Poet, Lamb's dear Friend and Correspondent) desiring to learn from his Correspondent (Mr. J. Keymer, of Cheapside) any further Account of Lamb's last days, and very interesting as to Lamb's personality. "*calf extra, g. e. by Lewis, post* 8*vo. Moxon*, 1835."

But either the happy purchaser, or the subsequent possessor of his estate to the extent of these volumes, like many another good man, had to let his treasures go; for into Messrs. Sotheby's hands they again passed, and were announced as for sale on May 10th, 1892. Fool that I was!—in furnishing an agent with instructions to make the purchase, I gave him a limit as to price; and the

books, at £29, found a home in the collection of another. At the same sale, Lamb's two-paged MS. of "Dream-Children" slipped beyond my reserve, and realised £51.

But that was ten years ago, and since then scraps in the autograph of Lamb and first editions of his works have advanced in price by leaps and bounds. When in town a few days ago, some Lamb items drew my steps in the direction of Messrs. Sotheby's rooms, where I witnessed the sale of a two-paged letter of his for £42. His little *King and Queen of Hearts* (an imperfect copy) found a purchaser at the same time at £240, whilst for his *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia* £59 was obtained.

The 1823 *Elia* is by no means a scarce book; but the 1833 *Last Essays* is, and collectors will do well to secure their copies even at the present high

price. Whereas we have two, if not three, distinct issues of the first, of the second only a limited number ever got into circulation; as a matter of fact, I think it will be found that there are five or six first *Elias* in existence for every one of the *Last Essays*.

When his old friend Randal Norris died, Lamb wrote the well-known letter to Crabb Robinson in which he told him: "To the last he [Norris] called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now." This was dated Jan. 20th, 1827. With the date altered to Feb. 10th, Lamb sent the same account, but with the characters disguised, to Hone's *Table Book*, where it appeared as "A Death-Bed," with the letter L. only for signature. This latter version appeared in the 1833 *Last Essays*, in the place occupied in subsequent editions by the "Confessions of a Drunkard."

Elia was on sale as a first edition for the ten years from 1823 to 1833, but a new issue of the second volume appeared in two years from its first publication, with the excision of "A Death-Bed," probably in deference to the wish of Mrs. Norris, that her poverty should not be so proclaimed.

With regard to Lamb from a collector's point of view: it is often said that nothing of his can now-a-days be "picked up" at a moderate price. That this is not so, this little paper-covered *Satan in Search of a Wife*, perfect and spotless as when it came from Moxon's shop in 1831, could bear witness, were it but permitted to tell its tale. And quite recently a friend of mine uncovered for my delectation an oil painting which is clearly a long-forgotten portrait of Mary Lamb, when about forty-five years of age.

VIII.

SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS WITH REFERENCE TO LAMB.

ONLY those of us content with the quiet life know aught of the abiding sense of the value and glory of the living present. Dreams vast and gorgeous as any you will find have been mine. Some have been realized, some have not. But youth stands a little back in the past now, the blood courses somewhat more soberly in the veins, the head is cooler, and oh! how much more precious are the moments in which I live than all the outstretching years which never may be mine. The fruit now hanging on the tree in my garden is of more value to

me than the promised crops of many a harvest-time to come.

> "In some unimagined Spring
> I may find my voice and sing
> The song I have never sung."

I may! but it behoves me to enjoy what little singing is possible to me now, instead of waiting for some other and more-favoured Springtide.

I know of nothing more full of pathos than these few words in which Mr. Austin Dobson tells of his dead friend Cosmo Monkhouse:—"His dream through a life of many duties, was of a leisure when he might listen to his own thoughts, and set them to a fitting music But death left that dream unrealized."

Here, in the first volume of my *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb*, is a letter in Talfourd's autograph, in which, in the year of its publication (1848), he tells a friend what a pleasure it is to him to

find him "enjoying a dignified repose after a life of perpetual toil and excitement, and diversifying judicial labours with literary associations." "I have little hope," he says, "of catching any rest myself till failing strength shall compel me to retire to some very humble resting-place."

We all grumble occasionally at the conditions of life and wish them mended. Lamb was mortal in this same direction. Probably some office-bother or other (and in what office does everything go smoothly always for its officials?) caused Lamb to cry out one day: "Oh for a few years between the grave and the desk!" and as a consequence many sapient writers have furnished us with considerable foolishness concerning the waste, in the India House, of Lamb's precious hours. Now, this question of waste depends entirely on the point from

which we view Lamb and his daily duties. If we set aside the *dicta* of those who are dreamers only, and, as such, disinclined to the more serious pursuits of life, and consider the matter dispassionately and with some slight show of reason, we shall, I think, see that such a situation as that enjoyed by Lamb—and I use the word *enjoyed* with due purpose and in its fullest sense—was the very best possible to a man of his temperament and powers of mind. As a literary man only, he would probably have been no happier than he was—perhaps considerably less so; his ability to watch over and care for his sister might have been more limited, and his temper not so loving and patient; and possibly the provision he was able to make for Mary during the years she outlived him would have been *nil*.

The great legacy with which Lamb

has enriched us lies chiefly in the *Elia Essays* and the letters to personal friends; and I have no hesitation in saying that, written under other conditions, these would have lost much of that delicate flavour and old-world charm which we take to have resulted to a considerable extent from the leisurely life he lived both in his office and out of it.

Only think for a moment what a paradise such an appointment as Lamb's would be in these days to a man with a leaning to letters, but deficient in the push and particular cast of intellect necessary to successful battling with the mob shouldering each other in anxiety to find but the first step of the ladder of literary success. Lamb was undoubtedly unfit to scramble successfully on his own account in ordinary commercial life, or in fact in any occupation where money was to be made. As he himself con-

fessed, his duties were but sufficient to keep him engaged two hours a day; and he accordingly penned most of the letters we now bless him and the India House for, during office hours, which, by the way, demanded his attendance only from ten to four, and returned him in exchange a salary which, by the time he had arrived at fifty, was £600 per annum. Then again, only consider—a pension of £450 for life when he was fifty years of age!

Let anyone inclined to pity Lamb take these points into consideration, together with the fact that his social position was originally sufficiently lowly to make such an income appear to him little short of affluence. Personally, I am compelled to conclude that Lamb was fortunate in the direction of his daily life, with its sure and comfortable income, its far from arduous duties, its

sufficiency of leisure, and the many other things to be thankful for resulting directly or indirectly from such a happy combination of circumstances.

And Lamb himself, in spite of his occasional outbursts, knew, I have no doubt, how well-off he really was, and appreciated his position accordingly. It is but natural to protest occasionally against duties which compel one's feet office-wards on, say, every fine morning in a month following a prolonged season of wet and miserable weather, or to rebel, more or less openly, against demands which call for the attention of brains a trifle unsteady as the result of a little extra conviviality the night before. The finer the texture, the louder the protest, the more pronounced the rebellion. Here, I take it, we have Lamb's case, which certainly merits no pity and calls for no such expression as

"poor Charles!" A little commonsense is necessary to a just appreciation of that side of Lamb's character and experience which lay nearest the India House.

For those who persist in wishing that Lamb's conditions of life might have been other than they were, the following has been penned :—

And God, walking in Paradise, came upon Elia in the midst of his friends. Coleridge, "the archangel somewhat damaged"; "good, unincendiary" George Dyer; Mandarin Manning; Bridget Elia; Sarah Battle, "who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist"; some chimney-sweepers of tender growth, "dim specks, poor blots, innocent blacknesses" —these were among the number. And there was much stammering and many jokes.

Then enquired the Lord: "What doest thou, Charles Lamb?"

And the whilom essayist, with head inclined in reverent love and with the old smile his friends knew so well, made answer and said: "I but continue the life Thou gavest me to live on earth."

Then the All-Father, detecting the faint note of unsatisfaction which unwittingly hung about the words, inclined Himself in tenderness to the speaker, remembering how in the days past He had given to Mary the twist in her intellect, and to Charles the dead wood of the India House desk and the want of the fair-haired Alice W—n; and He said unto him: "Take thy life and the power to mould it into thine own hands, and live again in the lower world."

And the curtain of years rolled back and Lamb was a pilgrim on earth. No sad catastrophe robbed him of his mother; his sister Mary was troubled by no mental cloud; Alice W—n was his wife, and

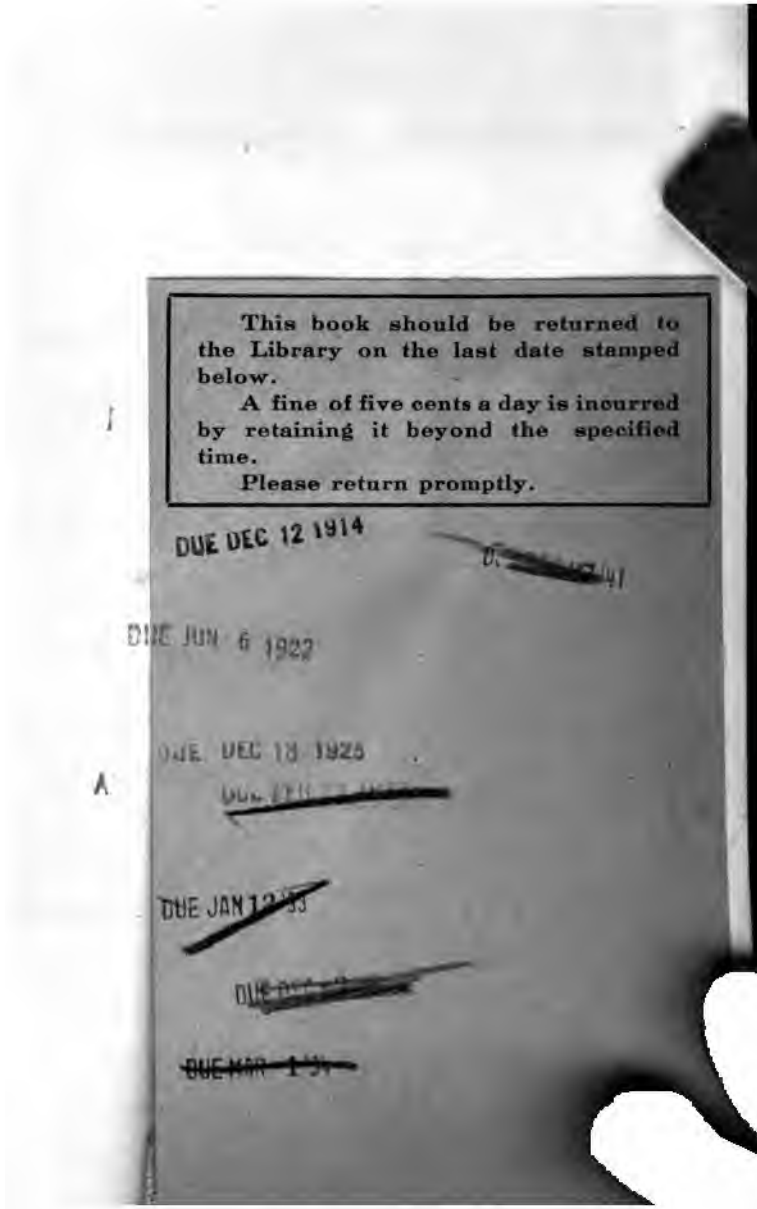
around him romped the children who owned his Alice as mother; his India House duties were pleasant; and in unimpeachable respectability he prospered greatly. And when, in fulness of years, he laid himself down to his last sleep, much was said by many of his piety and position.

But when at heaven's gate he reckoned with the porter, there were no *Elia Essays* to show. And Peter wept at the world's poverty.

. . . . .

But I have only commenced to tell of my books.

R. FOLKARD AND SON, PRINTERS, 22, DEVONSHIRE STREET, QUEEN SQUARE, BLOOMSBURY, W.C.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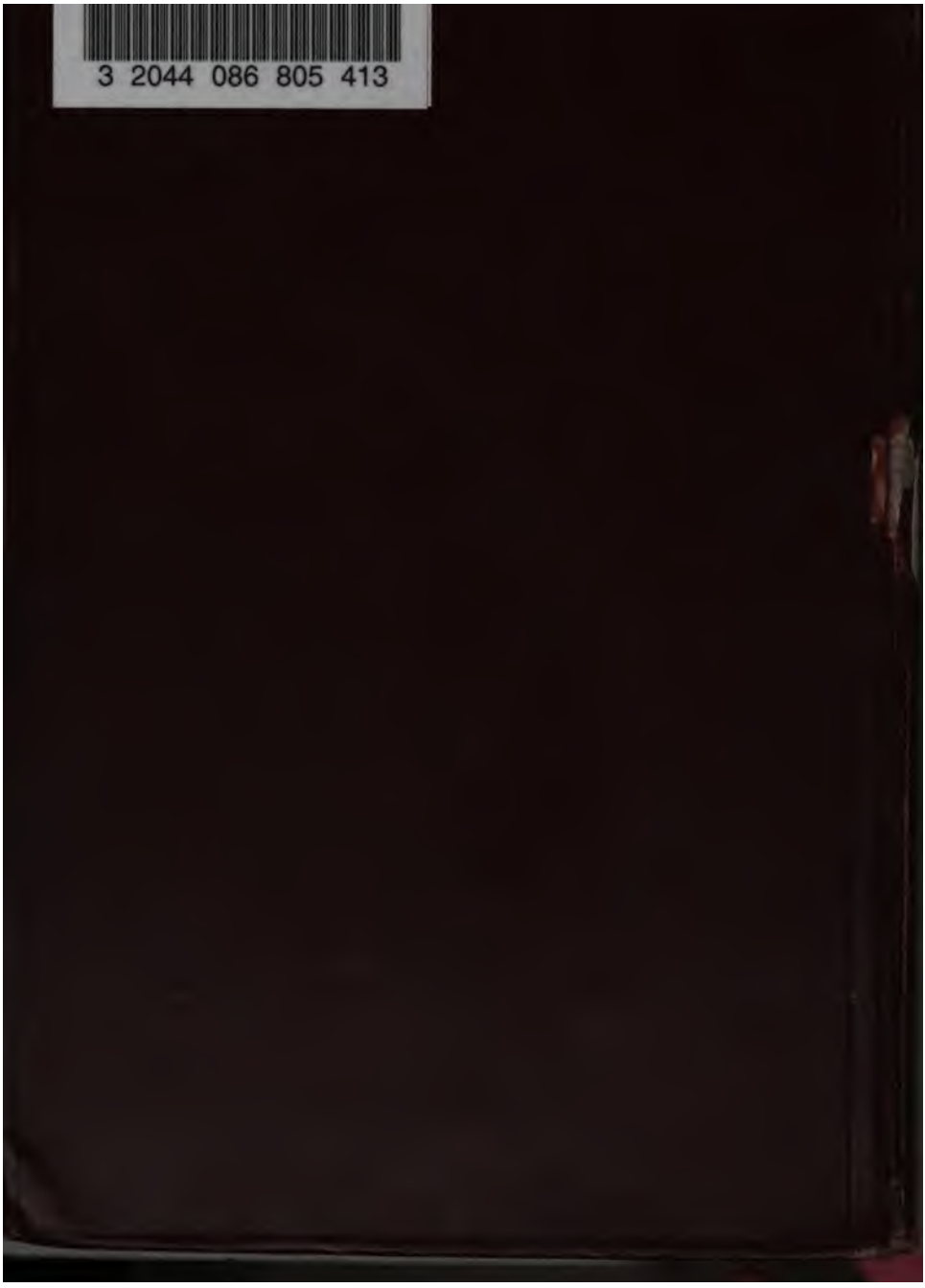
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